

owner, there's a chance for you. No guarantees of success, but the opportunity is available for people from all walks of life, I might add, all throughout our society. You know, one of the great strengths of America is the fact that we've got a lot of people that say, "I want to own my own company," and feel confident in trying to start that business and making it work. It's really what makes our society such a vibrant and wholesome place.

We're looking at two people right here who have taken on the tough task of running a small business. It's not easy. It may look simple when you hear them talk about it, but it's hard work. But it's the creativity and the spirit of the entrepreneur in America that I think sets us apart, and kind of the backbone and vibrancy of our society.

I want to say one other thing, and then I promise to be quiet. I met a guy at the airport today. Where is he? Did he come out? There he is. This is a good man. This is Brad Simmons. You probably never heard of Brad; I hadn't either until I landed. The reason I mention Brad is he works for Ford, but more importantly, he is in charge of encouraging Ford employees to volunteer in your communities. See, he's taken it upon himself to tap into the true spirit of the American soul, and that is that spirit that says, "I want to help a neighbor in need." And Brad's particular focus has been on Boy Scouts. But he's got a broader job at Ford, and that is to say—to encourage voluntarism.

You know, the reason I like to talk about people like Brad—as I told Brad, he is a soldier in the army of compassion in our country. It's the Brad Simmonses of the world who really define the true character of America. You see, our strength is not measured by the size of our military or the size of our Treasury. Our strength is measured by the size of the hearts and souls of our fellow citizens, people who are willing to love a neighbor just like they'd like to be loved themselves. Brad reflects the true spirit of America. He's a great credit upon the country.

And for those of you who are doing your duty as responsible citizens, whether it being a good mom or a dad or helping a neighbor in need, I want to thank you on behalf of a grateful nation. The strength of America is the people of this country. And it's my

privilege to be the President of such a great country.

God bless you all. Thank you for coming.

NOTE: The President spoke at 1:24 p.m. In his remarks, he referred to Secretary of State Terri Lynn Land and State Attorney General Mike Cox of Michigan; Loren Epler, president, and Sam Domke, quality manager, Dynamic Metal Treating, Inc.; and Tom Zimmerman, secretary and treasurer, Spectrum Automation Co.

Remarks at a Bush-Cheney Reception in Whippany, New Jersey *December 1, 2003*

The President. Thank you all very much. I appreciate the warm welcome. I'm so thankful so many friends have come tonight. You know, earlier this fall, I had the honor of welcoming a fine hockey team from this State to the White House to celebrate their championship. But the start the Devils have had this season looks like they need to repeat their trip back to the White House. I'm making similar plans myself. And with your help tonight, we are laying the foundation for what will be a victory in New Jersey in '04 and a nationwide victory in '04.

I'm getting ready. I'm loosening up. But the truth of the matter is, politics will come in its own time. See, I've got a job to do. What I would like for you to do is to remind your friends and neighbors that this administration and this President is working hard to keep America secure and strong and peaceful and free.

My only regret tonight is that Laura is not traveling with me.

Audience members. Aw-w-w.

The President. No, I know. Yes. [*Laughter*] You'd rather have her. I don't blame you. [*Laughter*] She's a fabulous wife, a great mother, and she's doing a wonderful job as our country's First Lady. And somebody who did a great job for our country, a valued member of my Cabinet, a person whose judgment I trust, that would be Christie Todd Whitman. I'm proud—[*applause*]. I miss her. But she did leave behind a little something there in Washington, DC; his name is Barney. [*Laughter*] I know—

Audience member. I love you!

The President. *Gracias.* [Laughter] I appreciate the fact that Christie Todd is our State chairman. And I want to thank my friend Lew Eisenberg for being the State campaign cochairman and finance chairman for the great State of New Jersey. I understand that some of Lew's grandchildren gave the Pledge of Allegiance. They're raising them right in his family. [Laughter]

I want to thank Congressman Rodney Frelinghuysen for being here. Rodney is a friend and an ally. He's doing a great job for the people of New Jersey. I'm also pleased that his wife, Virginia, is with him. I also want to thank my friend and ally Mike Ferguson—Congressman Mike Ferguson.

I know we've got members of the statehouse here. I particularly want to thank Senator Joe Kyrillos, who is the party chairman; State Senator Leonard Lance, who is the new minority leader for the State senate; State Assemblyman Alex DeCroke is the new minority leader.

I know we've got a lot of mayors here. I want to thank the mayors for coming. My only advice is to make sure you fill the potholes—[laughter]—and pick up the garbage. [Laughter] I thank the mayors for being here. Thank you for serving your towns and your communities.

I particularly want to thank my friend Mercer Reynolds, who's the national finance chairman. And he's from Cincinnati, Ohio. He's joined us today.

I want to thank all the grassroots activists who are here. You win campaigns by convincing your neighbor to go to the poll. So I want to thank you for what you're going to do, which is put up the signs and get on the phones and mail out the letters and convince your fellow citizens to do their duty and to show up to vote in November of 2004. You might just convince them, when they show up to vote, to vote for Bush-Cheney.

Remind them that during the last 3 years, our Nation has acted decisively to confront great challenges. I came to this office to solve problems and not pass them on to future Presidents and future generations. I came to seize opportunities instead of letting them slip away. My administration is meeting the tests of our time.

Terrorists declared war on the United States of America, and war is what they got. We captured or killed many of the key leaders of the Al Qaida network, and the rest of them know we're on their trail. In Afghanistan and Iraq, we gave ultimatums to terror regimes. Those regimes chose defiance, and those regimes are no more. Fifty million people in those two countries once lived under tyranny, and today, they live in freedom.

Three years ago, our military was not receiving the resources it needed, and morale was beginning to suffer, so we increased the defense budgets to prepare for the threats of a new era. And today, no one in the world can question the skill, the strength, and the spirit of the United States military.

Three years ago, the economy was in trouble and a recession was beginning. And then our country was attacked, and we had scandals in corporate America, and war—all affected the people's confidence. But we acted. We passed up new laws to hold corporate criminals to account. And to get the economy going again, I have twice led the United States Congress to pass historic tax relief for the American people. We know that when Americans have more take-home pay to spend, to save, or invest, the whole economy grows, and people are more likely to find a job. That's why we're returning more money to the people to help them raise their families, why we reduced taxes on dividends and capital gains to encourage investment. And that's why we're giving small businesses incentives to expand and to hire new people. With all these actions, this administration has laid the foundation for greater prosperity across America so that every single person in this country has a chance to realize the American Dream.

Today, the American economy is strong, and it is getting stronger. Perhaps you noticed that the third quarter annualized rate of growth numbers were increased to 8.2 percent, the fastest pace in nearly 20 years. Today the Purchasing Managers Index came out, showing that our manufacturing sector is recovering strongly. Productivity is high. Housing constructing is booming. The tax relief we passed, the economic stimulus plan that we passed, is working.

Three years ago, there was a lot of talk about education reform in Washington, DC, but there wasn't much action. So I acted. I called for and the Congress passed the No Child Left Behind Act. With a solid bipartisan majority, we delivered the most dramatic education reform in a generation. We believe that every child in America can learn the basics of reading and math, and we believe that every school in America should teach the basics. This administration is challenging the soft bigotry of low expectations. In return for increased Federal dollars, we now expect results. The days of excuse-making are over. We want every child to learn to read and write and add and subtract so that not one single child is left behind in America.

We reorganized our Government and created the Department of Homeland Security to better safeguard the borders and ports of America and to better protect the American people. We passed trade promotion authority to open up new markets for New Jersey's farmers and entrepreneurs and manufacturers. We passed budget agreements to help bring spending discipline to Washington, DC. On issue after issue, this administration has acted on principle, has kept its word, and has made progress for the American people.

The United States Congress has shared in these great achievements. I appreciate working with Speaker Denny Hastert and Majority Leader Bill Frist. I want to thank Rodney and Mike for working with us to focus on results. The tone in Washington needs to be changed. There's too much needless partisanship, backbiting, and bickering. The best way to do that is to focus on results, and that's what we'll continue to do. We'll work with Congress to focus on results, to do the people's business.

And those are the kind of people I've attracted to my administration. I've put together a superb group of men and women from all walks of life to serve the American people. And we've had no finer Vice President than Dick Cheney. Mother may have a second opinion. *[Laughter]*

In 3 years, we have done a lot. In 3 years, we've come far, but our work is only beginning. I have set great goals worthy of a great nation. First, America is committed to ex-

panding the realm of freedom and peace for our own security and for the benefit of the world. And second, in our own country, we must work for a society that is prosperous and compassionate so every single citizen has a chance to work and to succeed and realize the great promise of America.

It is clear that the future of freedom and peace depend on the actions of America. This Nation is freedom's home and freedom's defender. We welcome this charge of history, and we are keeping it. The war on terror continues. The enemies of freedom are not idle, and neither are we. This country will not rest, we will not tire, we will not stop until this danger to civilization is removed.

We're confronting that danger in Iraq, where Saddam holdouts and foreign terrorists are desperately trying to throw Iraq into chaos by attacking coalition forces and international aid workers and innocent Iraqi citizens. They know that the advance of freedom in the heart of the Middle East would be a major defeat for the cause of terror. This collection of coldblooded killers is trying to shake the will of the United States. The United States will never be intimidated by a bunch of thugs and assassins.

We are aggressively striking the terrorists in Iraq, defeating them there so we do not have to face them in our own country. And other nations are helping, because they understand a free Iraq will make us all more secure. And we're standing with the brave Iraqi people as they assume more of their own defense and move toward self-government. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential tasks. We will finish what we have begun, and we will win this essential victory in the war on terror.

Our greatest security comes from the advance of human liberty, because free nations do not support terror. Free nations do not attack their neighbors. Free nations do not threaten the world with weapons of mass terror. Americans believe that freedom is the deepest need and hope of every human heart. I believe that freedom is the future of every nation. And I know that freedom is not America's gift to the world; freedom is the Almighty's gift to each man and woman who lives in the world.

America understands that unprecedented influence brings tremendous responsibilities. We have duties in this world. When we see disease and starvation and hopeless poverty, we will not turn away. And that is why, on the continent of Africa, America is now committed to bringing the healing power of medicine to millions of men, women, and children now suffering with AIDS. This great, powerful nation is leading the world in this incredibly important work of human rescue.

We face challenges at home as well, and our actions will prove that we're equal to the challenges. Even though the economic numbers look good, there are still people who are trying to find a job. I will continue to promote a progrowth, entrepreneurially friendly growth package so that the people of America can find work.

As Christie Todd has mentioned, we are keeping our commitment to America's seniors by strengthening and modernizing Medicare. For years, seniors have called for a modern Medicare system that provides health care choices and prescription drug coverage. For years, the Congress did nothing. Finally, the House and the Senate have both approved legislation, which I will soon sign, that will keep our promise to America's seniors.

For the sake of our health care system, we need to cut down on the frivolous lawsuits which increase the cost of medicine. People who have been harmed by a bad doc deserve their day in court, yet the system should not reward lawyers who are simply fishing for a rich settlement. Frivolous lawsuits drive up the cost of health care and, therefore, they affect the Federal budget. Medical liability reform is a national issue which requires a national solution. I submitted a good plan to the Congress. The House of Representatives passed the plan. It is stuck in the United States Senate. Perhaps you ought to write your United States Senators and remind them that nobody in America has been healed by a frivolous lawsuit. We need medical liability reform now.

I have a responsibility as your President to make sure the judicial system runs well, and I have met that duty. I have nominated superb men and women to the Federal bench, people who will interpret the law, not

legislate from the bench. Some Members of the United States Senate are trying to keep my nominees off the bench by blocking up-or-down votes. Every judicial nominee deserves a fair hearing and an up-or-down vote on the Senate floor. It is time for some of the Members of the U.S. Senate to stop playing politics with American justice.

Congress needs to get an energy bill to my desk. This country needs a comprehensive energy plan that will encourage conservation, that will enable us to develop new technologies that will enable us to find energy in environmentally friendly ways. For the sake of economic security and for the sake of national security, this country must become less dependent on foreign sources of energy.

A strong and prosperous nation must also be a compassionate nation. I will continue to advance our agenda of what I call compassionate conservatism, which means we'll find the most innovative, effective ideas to help neighbors who hurt. There are still millions of men and women who want to end their dependence upon Government and become independent through hard work. Congress must continue to build on the success of welfare reform, provide job training money to help our fellow citizens find a job. Congress should complete the "Citizen Service Act" so more Americans can serve their communities and their country. Both Houses should reach agreement on my Faith-Based Initiative to support the armies of compassion that are mentoring children and caring for the homeless and offering hope for the addicted. One of the great strengths of our country is the fact that we are a nation of many faiths and the fact that faith-based people, whether they be Christian, Jewish, or Muslim, have had a universal call to help somebody in need. Government should not fear faith; we ought to welcome faith and to help healing—to help to heal hurting hearts and people who need help in America.

A compassionate society must promote opportunity for all, including the independence and dignity that come from ownership. This administration will constantly strive to promote an ownership society in America. We want more people owning their own home. We have a minority homeownership gap in

America. I presented plans to the Congress to close that gap. We want more people owning and managing their own retirement accounts and their own health care plans. We want more people owning their own small business in America, because this administration understands that when a person owns something, he or she has a vital stake in the future of our country.

In a compassionate society, people respect one another, respect their point of view, respect their religious beliefs, and take responsibility for the decisions they make. The culture of America is changing from one that has said, "If it feels good, do it," and "If you've got a problem, blame somebody else," to a new day, a culture in which each of us understands that we're responsible for the decisions we make in life. If you are fortunate enough to be a mother or a father, you're responsible for loving your child with all your heart. If you're worried about the quality of the education in the community in which you live, you're responsible for doing something about it. If you're a CEO in corporate America, you're responsible for telling the truth to your shareholders and your employees. And in a new responsibility society, each of us is responsible for heeding a universal call to love a neighbor just like we'd like to be loved ourself.

The culture of service is strong in America. People are responding to the call to serve their country. I started what's called the USA Freedom Corps to encourage Americans to extend a compassionate hand to a neighbor in need. The response has been strong. People are serving their Nation by supporting charities, faith-based groups, neighborhood healers that are changing America one life at a time. Policemen and firefighters and the people who wear our Nation's uniform remind us what it means to sacrifice for something greater than ourselves. Once again, the children of America believe in heroes, because they see them every day.

In these challenging times, the world has seen the resolve and the courage of America. I've been privileged to see the compassion and the character of the American people. All the tests of the last 3 years have come to the right nation. We're a strong country, and we use that strength to defend the peace.

We're an optimistic country, confident in ourselves and in ideals bigger than ourselves.

Abroad, we seek to lift whole nations by spreading freedom. At home, we seek to lift up lives by spreading opportunity to every corner of America. This is the work that history has set before us. We welcome it. And we know that for our country, the best days lie ahead.

Thank you for coming. God bless.

NOTE: The President spoke at 5:55 p.m. at the Hanover Marriott. In his remarks, he referred to Christine Todd Whitman, former Administrator, Environmental Protection Agency.

Statement on Signing the Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, 2004

December 1, 2003

Today, I have signed into law H.R. 2754, the "Energy and Water Development Appropriations Act, 2004." The Act funds programs of the Department of Energy, the Department of the Interior's Bureau of Reclamation, the Army Corps of Engineers, and several other agencies, and provides funds to help protect the Nation's environment.

The executive branch shall construe provisions of the Act that direct the Secretary of a military department to perform the Secretary's duties through a particular military officer in a manner consistent with the statutory authority of the Secretary of Defense to exercise authority, direction, and control of the Department of Defense and the constitutional authority of the President to supervise the unitary executive branch and as Commander in Chief.

Provisions in sections 209 and 303 and under the heading "Construction, General" in title I purport to require the approval of committees of the Congress before executive branch execution of aspects of the Act or to preclude executive branch execution of a provision of the Act upon the written disapproval of such a committee. The executive branch shall construe such provisions to require only notification to the Congress, as any other construction would contravene the